

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13

ACDA-07 SAM-01 OMB-01 TRSE-00 EB-07 /088 W

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FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0550

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION USBERLIN

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 12241

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR GW XH

SUBJECT: THE FUTURE OF EASTERN POLICY IN THE PRESS

SUMMARY. A SPATE OF PRESS STORIES IN BONN OVER THE PAST FEW DAYS HAS EMPHASIZED AN OPTIMISTIC THEME FOR EAST-WEST RELATIONS. THE STORIES ARE OBVIOUSLY COMING FROM VARIOUS SOURCES IN THE GOVERNMENT AND DIFFER ON DETAILS. HOWEVER, THEY AGREE THAT FOR VARIOUS REASONS EASTERN POLICY WILL BE RELATIVELY QUIET UNTIL AFTER THE ELECTIONS IN OCTOBER. AT THAT TIME IT WILL BECOME MORE ACTIVE, PERHAPS TO THE POINT OF A MEETING AT THE SUMMIT BETWEEN BREZHNEV AND SCHMIDT. END SUMMARY.

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1. FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE (FAZ), FOR EXAMPLE, IN AN ARTICLE ON JULY 17, PAINTS AN OPTIMISTIC PICTURE OF EAST-WEST RELATIONS AFTER THE ELECTIONS. QUOTING INFLUENTIAL CIRCLES IN BONN, THE ARTICLE CLAIMS THAT THE FRG WILL CARRY OUT NEW BASIC DISCUSSIONS WITH BREZHNEV OVER GERMANY AND BERLIN DURING A BREZHNEV VISIT TO BONN IN THE LAST QUARTER OF 1976. UP TO OCTOBER THE POLITICAL PRESSURES OF THE PRE-ELECTION PERIOD WILL KEEP THE EASTERN FRONT QUIET.

2. THE ARTICLE ALSO ARGUES THAT, IN SPITE OF DIFFICULTIES, RELATIONS ARE NOT POOR AT PRESENT. TWO-THIRDS OF THE QUADRIPARTITE AGREEMENT ARE FUNCTIONING AND COOPERATION BETWEEN THE FRG AND THE USSR IN MANY ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL FIELDS IS DEEP AND WIDE. HOWEVER, THERE ARE LIMITS TO HOW FAR RELATIONS CAN PROGRESS, WHICH MAKES NECESSARY A DISCUSSION OF PRINCIPLES AFTER THE ELECTIONS.

3. IN AN ARTICLE IN FRANKFURTER RUNDSCHAU, STATE SECRETARY GUENTHER GAUS, FRG REP IN EAST BERLIN, IS QUOTED AS SEEING VERY REAL POSSIBILITIES FOR NEW AGREEMENTS WITH THE GDR. IN AN UPBEAT MANNER, GAUS PREDICTS PROGRESS AND SUCCESSFUL RESOLUTION OF SEVERAL OUTSTANDING QUESTIONS. THE EFFECT OF THIS AND OTHER SIMILAR ARTICLES MAY BE INTENDED TO OFFSET THE RATHER PESSIMISTIC VIEW OF INNER-GERMAN RELATIONS WHICH WAS GIVEN BY THE LEAKING OF GAUS' PAPER PREPARED FOR THE CONFERENCE OF FRG AMBASSADORS IN EASTERN EUROPE. WE UNDERSTAND THAT GAUS WAS NOT INSTRUCTED TO MEET WITH THE PRESS TO COUNTER THE IMPACT OF THIS EARLIER PAPER, BUT CHOSE TO DO SO ON HIS OWN WHILE SCHMIDT WAS VISITING THE US. AS ADDRESSEES ARE AWARE, RELATIONS BETWEEN SCHMIDT AND GAUS ARE NOT CLOSE.

4. DER SPIEGEL, IN ITS JULY 19 EDITION, CARRIES AN ARTICLE WHICH CLAIMS THAT SCHMIDT AND THE PRESIDENT AGREED DURING A TALK AT THE WHITE HOUSE NOT TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF SOVIET WEAKNESS AT THIS TIME. THE DER SPIEGEL ARTICLE CLAIMS THAT:

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-- BREZHNEV'S POSITION IN MOSCOW IS WEAKENED.

-- THE POSITION OF THE HARDLINERS IS STRONGER.

-- CONSEQUENTLY, BREZHNEV'S ABILITY TO CARRY OUT DETENTE POLICY IS NOT AS STRONG AS IT USED TO BE.

5. ACCORDING TO DER SPIEGEL, THE ECPC WEAKENED THE

POLITICAL-IDEOLOGICAL LEADERSHIP OF MOSCOW. THE POSITION
OF THE FRENCH AND ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTIES WAS
STRENGTHENED AT BERLIN. THE RESULT OF ECPC IS THAT
CARRYING OUT AN EFFECTIVE FRG EASTERN POLICY IS MORE
DIFFICULT BECAUSE OF SOVIET WEAKNESS AND POSSIBLE
IMMOBILITY IN THE WAKE OF IDEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS. DER
SPIEGEL ALSO CLAIMS THAT THE SOVIET EMBASSY IN BONN IS
ADVISING THE FRG THAT IT WOULD NOT BE IN THE INTEREST
OF THE FRG OR THE USSR IF THE FRG WERE TO EXPLOIT THE
RESULTS OF THE ECPC. ANY MEDDLING IN EASTERN EUROPE

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WOULD CAUSE THE COLLAPSE OF DETENTE.

6. DER SPIEGEL SAYS THIS SIGNAL FROM MOSCOW HAS NOT FALLEN ON DEAF EARS IN BONN, BUT SCHMIDT AND HIS CABINET HAVE BEEN TOO CONCERNED WITH ELECTIONS AND TERRORISM TO ANALYZE THE ECPC, MUCH LESS DEVISE A NEW CONCEPT FOR EASTERN POLICY. INSTEAD, THE ARTICLE ARGUES, THE GOVERNMENT WILL WAIT UNTIL AFTER THE OCTOBER ELECTIONS TO LAUNCH NEW INITIATIVES.

7. IT ALSO ARGUES THAT ONE CANNOT BE CERTAIN THAT THE
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ADVOCATES OF DETENTE CAN MAINTAIN THEIR POSITIONS IN THE KREMLIN. CSCE DID NOT BRING THE RESULTS THAT THE SOVIETS HAD HOPED FOR AND DID NOT RESULT IN A WEAKENING OF US PRESENCE IN EUROPE. MBFR HAS TAUGHT THE SOVIETS THAT THE US TROOP PRESENCE IN EUROPE CAN BE LESSENERD ONLY AT A PRICE: BALANCED REDUCTIONS. THIS REALIZATION WILL PROVOKE SOVIET CONCESSIONS AT THE NEXT ROUND.

8. THE ARTICLE CLAIMS THAT THERE IS A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION IN BONN ABOUT EAST-WEST RELATIONS. FOREIGN OFFICE EXPERTS ARE QUOTED AS FORESEEING A TIGHTENING UP IN EASTERN EUROPE, BUT NO BACKTRACKING ON RELATIONS WITH THE WEST. ECONOMIC CONNECTIONS WITH THE WEST ARE TOO STRONG TO BE BROKEN OFF ABRUPTLY. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT IS ARGUED IN HIGH CIRCLES IN THE SPD THAT MOSCOW'S WEAKNESS, COUPLED WITH A LOOSENING IN EASTERN EUROPE, COULD PROVOKE PRESSURES IN THE WEST FOR REUNIFICATION OF GERMANY. THE ARTICLE CONCLUDES WITH AN OUTLINE OF WHAT SCHMIDT WILL WANT TO DO AFTER THE ELECTIONS: CONCLUSION OF ELEMENTS OF LEGAL ASSISTANCE , AGREEMENT, A CREDIT OF DM ONE BILLION TO THE GDR, AND (AS A GESTURE OF GOOD WILL) ABOLITION OF THE MINISTRY FOR INNER-GERMAN AFFAIRS.

9. COMMENT: THSE STORIES ARE BASED ON BACKGROUND BRIEFING BY OFFICIALS IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE GERMAN BUREAUCRACY. WHILE WE UNDERSTAND CERTAIN ELEMENTS IN THE FONOFF SYMPATHIZE WITH THESE VIEWS, WE ARE NOT CERTAIN OF THE PRECISE SOURCE OF ALL THE ARTICLES (DER SPIEGEL PIECE, FOR EXAMPLE). WHILE THE ARTICLES DIFFER ON DETAILS, THEY AGREE ON TWO POINTS:

-- THE GOVERNMENT CANNOT BE BLAMED FOR THE LACK OF PROGRESS IN EAST-WEST RELATIONS. THE WEAKNESS OF BREZHNEV'S POSITION, PRE-ELECTION PRESSURES, ETC. ARE THE CAUSE.

-- IF THE SPD/FDP IS RETURNED TO POWER IN OCTOBER,
THEY WILL BE IN A POSITION TO CARRY OUT A RENEWED, MORE
EFFECTIVE EASTERN POLICY.

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